

REMARKS

Claims 17 and 20 have been amended. New claims 30-32 have been added. Claims 17-32 are currently pending. Reexamination and allowance of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

First, claims 28-29 were inadvertently truncated in the previous Amendment and are set forth above.

Independent claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as been anticipated by USP 6,522,930 to Schaer et al. ("Schaer"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 17 has been amended to recite that the sheath has a preshaped angled distal end. In contrast, the distal end of the element ("sheath") 124 in FIGS. 14-15 of Schaer is not preshaped at an angle. Thus, Schaer does not anticipate claim 17. Claims 18-30 depend from claim 17, and are submitted to be allowable for the same reasons.

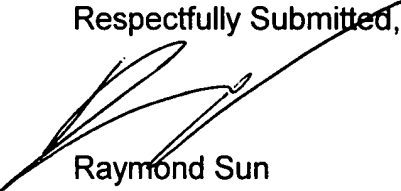
New claim 31 also includes the limitation of a sheath having a preshaped angled distal end. Thus, claim 31, and claim 32 depending therefrom, are submitted to be allowable over Schaer as well.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that this distinction, when coupled with the arguments set forth on pages 5 and 6 of the Amendment dated August 21, 2006, clearly evidence the non-obviousness of claim 17 over Schaer.¹ In particular, any attempt to combine another prior art reference (showing a sheath with a preshaped angled distal end) with Schaer would be result of impermissible hindsight reconstruction.

¹ To maintain the brevity of this Amendment, the examiner's attention is directed to pages 5 and 6 of the August 21, 2006 Amendment, as Applicant will not repeat these arguments here.

In light of the above reasons, all pending claims are submitted to be in condition for allowance. The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned if there are any remaining amendments or informalities that would place this application in condition for allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Date: December 4, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this paper is being deposited with the United States Postal service as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to the Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on the date shown below.

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